



South Dakota Department of the Military South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs



OGLALA SIOUX TRIBE DEDICATES NEW VETERANS CEMETERY

Veterans, tribal members, community leaders and dignitaries gathered in Kyle this week for the dedication and grand opening of the Akicita Owicahé Lakota Freedom Veterans Cemetery.

Two iron gates adorned with metal eagle feathers greet visitors as they travel down the driveway, lined with American flags, on their way to the information and visitors center.

The cemetery has 320 burials vaults, a traditional burial ground where graves will be dug by hand and a shelter for urns. It consists of 18 acres on a 63-acre site.

The site was made possible by a \$6.5 million grant by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs. It is the second in the nation to be built since 2006, when the VA opened its cemetery grants program to tribal governments. The Rosebud Sioux Tribe completed the first one in 2012 with a \$7 million grant.

SDDVA Deputy Secretary Pollard, in his remarks at the dedication, focused on duty — duty to our country, duty to take care of those that have served,

duty to take care of our fallen heroes, and duty to ensure that our fallen heroes are afforded the opportunity to be buried with their respective customs and traditions.

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Heroes Among Us—
showcasing 125 South Dakota
veterans.



NEW REGULATIONS AUTOMATE BURIAL PAYMENTS FOR VETERANS' SURVIVORS

New burial regulations will now allow the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to automatically pay the maximum amount allowable under law to most eligible surviving spouses more quickly and efficiently, without the need for a written application.

Under former regulations, the VA paid burial benefits on a reimbursement basis, which required survivors to submit receipts for relatively small one-time payments that the VA generally paid at the maximum amount permitted by law.

"The VA is committed to improving the speed and ease of delivery of monetary burial benefits to veterans' survivors during their time of need," said Acting VA Secretary Sloan Gibson. "The recent changes allow the VA to help these survivors bear the cost of funerals by changing regulations to get them the benefits more quickly."

This automation enables the VA to pay a non-service-connected or service-connected burial allowance to an estimated 62,000 eligible surviving spouses out of a projected 140,000 claimants for burial benefits in 2014. Surviving spouses will be paid upon notice of the veteran's death using information already in the VA systems. The burial allowance for a non-service-connected death is \$300, and \$2,000 for a death connected to military service.

This revised regulation will further expedite the delivery of these benefits to surviving spouses, reduce the volume of claims requiring manual processing, and potentially make available resources for other activities that benefit veterans and their survivors.

For more information on monetary burial benefits, visit <http://www.benefits.va.gov/compensation/claims-special-burial.asp>.

VA NAMES NEW INTERIM DIRECTOR OF THE OFFICE OF MEDICAL INSPECTOR

In response to the Office of Special Counsel's recent recommendations for the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Acting Secretary of Veterans Affairs Sloan Gibson today announced that Gerard R. Cox, MD, MHA will serve as Interim Director of the Office of Medical Inspector (OMI).

Dr. Cox was appointed Assistant Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Policy and Services for the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) in January 2014. Prior to joining VA, Dr. Cox served as a U.S. Navy medical officer for more than 30 years. Dr. Cox is a veteran of the Persian Gulf War, during which he was deployed to a Fleet Hospital in Saudi Arabia (1990-1991). He later oversaw Navy expeditionary health services throughout the Middle East, both ashore and afloat, while serving concurrently as Force Surgeon, U.S. Naval Forces Central Command and Fleet Surgeon, U.S. Fifth Fleet (2010-2012). In addition to other senior leadership positions, Dr. Cox also served as Assistant Inspector General of the Navy for Medical Matters.

155TH ENGINEER COMPANY RECEIVES SUPERIORS UNIT AWARD

The South Dakota Army National Guard's 155th Engineer Company received one of the highest accolades a unit can achieve when they were presented the Superior Unit Award, June 15, in Rapid City. The Superior Unit Award is presented to units who meet highly-enforced military standards in the areas of personnel, training and readiness.

"The 155 earned the Superior Unit Award because the Soldiers and leadership of the unit made it a priority to be prepared to respond to any mission at any time," said Capt. David Dodson, commander.

In order to achieve the award, units must maintain assigned personnel strength of 95 percent, complete inactive duty and annual training, and ensure that 95 percent of their Soldiers are fully qualified in their duty military occupation specialty.

"Meeting the criteria for the Superior Unit Award is not something that is accomplished during a single month or even a couple of drills," said Dodson. "This accomplishment is made by the

soldiers who do more than attend drill every month, but who take pride year-round in being a member of the 155."

In addition to meeting training goals, weapon qualification rates, Army Physical Fitness Test results and unit inspections factor into award requirements.

"For the company to achieve this award, the soldiers made the effort to meet the individual performance standards as well as the collective company criteria," said Dodson. "The effort made by individual soldiers to maintain their readiness was outstanding. Earning the Superior Unit Award is a celebration of the efforts made by the soldiers of the 155 throughout the year."

Dodson believes the award acknowledges the dedication of individuals whose efforts may go unrecognized but are critical to unit readiness.

"Extra effort, such as qualifying as expert at the range or improving a personal best during the APFT, is not always recognized but this award says these soldiers are among the best," said Dodson.

The Rapid City-based 155th is a vertical engineer company capable of providing engineer support in the construction of base camps and internment facilities, constructing, repairing and maintaining other vertical infrastructures in support of units within a brigade combat team, division or corps.



CODINGTON COUNTY VETERANS COURT

South Dakotans gathered in Watertown this week to witness Chief Justice David Gilbertson and Darwin Goodspeed, Director of Sioux Falls Veterans Affairs Health Care System, sign the Memorandum of Understanding for the opening of Codington County's Veterans Court.

During his opening remarks, Gilbertson encouraged the community to seek out the root of the problem when a veteran breaks the law. "The real issue is 'what got them there?'" Gilbertson said. "Was it self-medicating by alcohol, by drugs, mental illness, bringing back the problems by serving our country in harm's way?"

Gilbertson says a veterans court needs three things. It needs a plan, which started developing in the state after Gilbertson heard leaders in Texas talk about a successful program there. It also needs a team of community members to set up and carry out the court, holding participants accountable. Finally, the program needs a care provider. In this case, it'll be the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) where service members can be referred for treatment.

Codington County's is the first pilot program in the state. Eventually it will be one of three. Officials with the state's judicial system expect a veterans court to open in Sioux Falls next year and another in Rapid City within a few years.

Officials say it takes at least a couple years to start up a veterans court and that involves a lot of training. Members of the Sioux Falls team were in Minnesota Monday observing a veterans court as part of their training.

The first veterans' court was launched in Buffalo, N.Y., in January 2008 by Judge Robert Russell. His program was based on the various "problem-solving" courts around the country, ranging from specialized drug courts (first launched in 1989) to mental health and domestic violence courts.

SDDVA Deputy Secretary Aaron Pollard, represented the Department at this event and commends Chief Justice Gilbertson and community leaders for their efforts in making this program a reality. "It is important that we always remember the service of our veterans, and fulfill our sacred obligations to our veterans and their families who have sacrificed so much so that we can live free," said Deputy Secretary Pollard.



HEROES AMONG US

SDDVA Secretary Larry Zimmerman will tell you that one of the perks in traveling across the state, carrying out the mission to be the “voice for South Dakota veterans, is the opportunity to visit with a lot of veterans and their families and to hear their story..

During the recent Armed Forces Day program in Sioux Falls, Secretary Zimmerman had the occasion to meet 91-year old veteran Clint Nielsen.

In sharing his story, Clint noted that their 63rd Service Group got on board a Dutch freight ship at Brisbane Australia, loaded with aviation fuel. They docked at Port Moseby, New Guinea in late August 1943. Instead of landing, they went around to Oro Bay and landed by Leyte. Natives met them and they went further into the jungle and set up camp at Dobadorah. While there, a Japanese plane landed on their strip and started their planes which were ready to take off on missions the next day.

He recalls that early in September 1943 General MacArthur ordered 1,700 paratroopers to land at Nadzab, Mackham Valley. The 5th Air Force C-47 transports were used for this. The maneuver was to prevent Japanese escape from the peninsula in Lae area, the day after the para-

chute drop the same C-47's came back to Dobodorah. In Nadzab they set up their supply depots to service all bombers and fighter planes.

Clint noted that Nadzab was a good base to send missions from. When they landed there "Tokyo Rose" welcomed them. He said he saw a lot of bombing, one crater within 100 feet from his tent. Their six-buddy tent crew dug many a fox hole.

He moved to the Hillandia area by end of Oct 1944 and noted that he celebrated three birthdays in the Pacific.

Thank you Clint for your service to this great country.



Freedom Ride Poker Run

Hot Springs, SD - August 3rd, 2014

"The Veterans Town"

8:30 a.m. Registration at S.D. State Veteran's home – \$15 a Poker Hand

10:00 a.m. Freedom Ride Poker Run

**5:00 p.m. Benefit Auction & Freedom Ride Poker Run winners announced
(Best hand / 2nd Best hand / Worst hand)**

6:00 p.m. Freedom Ride DINNER

Sponsored by American Legion Riders of Battle Mountain Post 71

All Proceeds go to the S.D. State Veterans home.



Honoring Our Heroes from July 30th to Aug. 9th, 2014

- ❖ **July 30th 3 p.m.** Escort the AVTT Traveling Vietnam Memorial wall from Chadron, NE
- ❖ **July 31st 1 p.m.** Opening Ceremony for Vietnam Memorial wall
- ❖ **August 1st to 9th 8 a.m. to 9 p.m.** Through the Eyes Vietnam Memorial tent
- ❖ **August 2nd 6 p.m.** Honoring Our Heroes Dinner for Our Veterans
- ❖ **August 3rd 10 a.m.** Freedom Ride Poker Run
- ❖ **August 5th to 9th 6 p.m. to 10 p.m.** BANDS PLAYING NIGHTLY
- ❖ **August 6th 3 p.m.** Honoring Our Heroes BIKER GAMES
- ❖ **August 8th 5:30 p.m.** Honoring Our Heroes POKER RUN
- ❖ **August 9th 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.** Honoring Our Heroes CAR SHOW

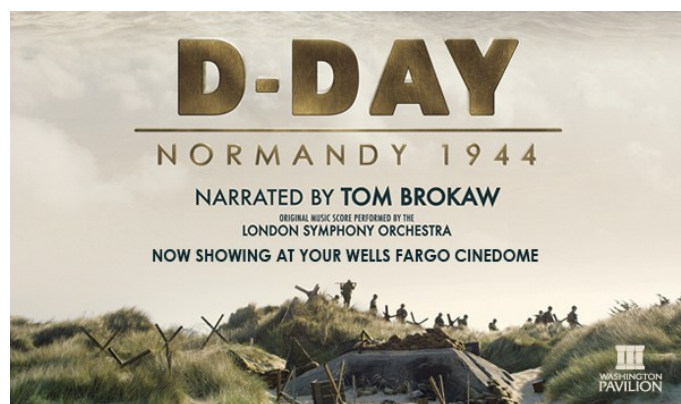
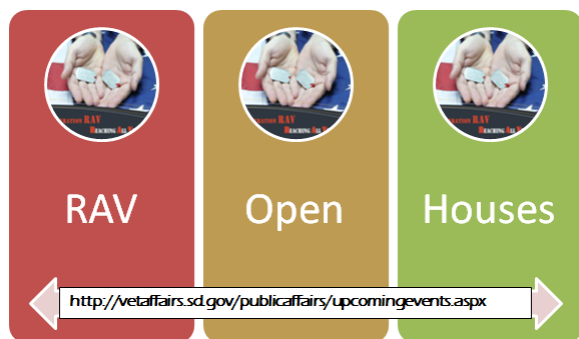


**For more information stop by the American Legion Post 71 – Hot Springs, SD or go to
www.battlemountainchapter71americanlegionriders.org**

Upcoming Events

2014

Jul. 16—SD Veterans Council Meeting—DAV Headquarters—Sioux Falls—10:00 am
 Aug. 6—DOL Veterans/Guardsmen/Reservists/Spouses Job Fair—Augustana College Elmen Center—10:00 am—2:00 pm
 Aug. 20—Annual SFVAHCS Show and Shine
 Aug. 22—SFVAHCS Stand Down—Sioux City, IA
 Aug. 25-29—NACVSO Training Ramkota Hotel—Pierre
 Aug. 30— 727th DAV 10th Annual Charity Poker Run—Brookings—10:00 am
 Sept. 5—SFVAHCS Stand Down—Watertown
 Sept. 11—SFVAHCS Stand Down—Wagner
 Sept. 19—SFVAHCS Stand Down—Sioux Falls
 Oct. 6—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—BHNC—9:00 am



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